



*Embassy of the United States of America
American Citizen Services
24 Grosvenor Square
W1A 2LQ*

MARRIAGE REGULATIONS IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Civil (Non-Religious) Marriages: In general, for a civil marriage, both contracting parties must:

- observe the statutory residence requirements (see below);
- be at least 16 years old;
- obtain parental consent in writing if either party is under age 18 unless one is a widow or widower;
- if previously married, produce evidence that they are currently free to marry (for example, the original or a certified copy of the former spouse's death certificate or of the divorce decree); and
- arrange for two witnesses to be present at the marriage and to sign the Marriage Register.

Please note: New rules for getting married in the United Kingdom:

Brief Introduction to the new rules:

From 1 February 2005, people who are subject to immigration control who wish to marry in the United Kingdom (UK) will need to follow new procedures.

They must either:

- Hold entry clearance as a fiancé/e or marriage visitor, or
- Hold a Home Office certificate of approval, or
- Be a person with settled status in the UK (e.g. indefinite leave to remain)

For further information please visit: www.ukvisas.gov.uk or www.britainusa.com.

Who regulates civil marriages in England and Wales? In each district there is a Registrar's Office. To find the nearest Registrar, look under "Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages" in the telephone directory, or call Directory Assistance (ph:192). The Registrar takes the Notice of Marriage (the license application), issues the certificate, and conducts the ceremony. For most visiting Americans, the most centrally located Registrar's Office is at Westminster Council House, Marylebone Road, London SW1E 6QP (ph: 020-7641-1161).

How do I obtain a certificate? There is a 7 day residence requirement for both parties, on the 8th day, both give 'Notice of Intent to Marry' to the local Register Office for the district in which they have been staying. A further 15 days waiting period must lapse before the marriage may take place. It is preferable that both parties give notice at the same time, if possible and each will have to pay a fee of £30. Each party will be also be required to declare nationality and provide evidence of identification, which satisfies the Superintendent Registrar.

Religious marriages in England and Wales: Church of England authorities advise that marriage in an Anglican church between two foreigners or between a foreigner and a British citizen should be by ecclesiastical license arranged through the Vicar of the church in which they wish to be married. For

information on marriage in accordance with Anglican rites, consult The Faculty Office, 1 The Sanctuary, London SW1P 3JS, telephone number 020-7222-5381. Protestants of other denominations or Quakers should consult the clergyman or governing body of the respective denomination. Roman Catholic authorities advise that parties to the marriage should give at least six weeks notice to the parish priest prior to the marriage to allow time for instruction, collection of documents, publication of banns, and other formalities. If the parties do not reside in the parish, they will need letters from the parish priests of their home parishes giving permission for the celebration of the marriage elsewhere. Jewish marriages may be performed under the auspices of a registered Synagogue and entered in the Synagogue's marriage registers. Further information may be obtained from the Office of the Chief Rabbi, 735 High Road, London N12 0US, telephone number 020-8343-8989. For religions not mentioned, please contact the appropriate governing authority.

Can a marriage take place anywhere? Marriages can be performed by a Registrar at any location, provided the venue is licensed, approved and registered for the purpose of marriage by the local government authority. Licensed venues may include hotels, public houses and stately homes. For a fee, the Registrar from the district where you reside may perform the marriage in another district's licensed venue. Fees vary according to the time and date you wish the marriage to take place. For a list of venues and fees, contact the nearest Registrar.

Is a marriage performed in the United Kingdom valid in the United States? In general, regardless of the nationality or religion of the persons married, marriages legally performed in the U.K. are also legally valid in the U.S.

What is the role of the Embassy? The Embassy has no role in the process, other than to administer oaths on documents as a notary service (please see http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/scs/notary.html for further information on notary services). American diplomatic and consular officers may not perform marriages or serve as witnesses. Marriages may not take place at the Embassy.

Is citizenship affected by marriage? No. An American citizen marrying an alien does not lose American citizenship nor do they automatically acquire British citizenship if marrying a British citizen. The American will continue to hold an American passport. Similarly, an alien does NOT acquire American citizenship by marriage to an American citizen. After marriage, an American citizen may amend his/her surname to reflect the married name by presenting their U.S. passport and a certified copy of the marriage certificate to a consular official at the Embassy. This service is free of charge **if your name has been legally changed due to marriage or a court order within one year from the date of issuance of your currently valid passport.**

An alien spouse who intends to reside in the United States must obtain a U.S. immigrant visa prior to entering the United States. For information, consult our website, <http://london.usembassy.gov>, or send a request and stamped, addressed envelope to the Consular Information Unit, 24 Grosvenor Square, London W1A 1AE, or call 09068-200290 (premium rates apply). American citizens coming to the United Kingdom to marry British citizens or persons settled here normally require entry clearance from the British Immigration Service. Clearance must be obtained in advance of arrival. For information on U.K. residence requirements, consult the website of the British Embassy in

Washington, D.C., www.britainusa.com, or contact the Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Block C, Whitgift Centre, Croydon CR9 2AR, telephone 0870-606 7766 and, or contact the entry clearance officer at the nearest British diplomatic mission overseas. Failure to comply with the requirement for entry clearance may result in refusal of entry to the United Kingdom.

For information on marriage in other parts of the U.K. or the Irish Republic, apply to:

Scotland

Registrar General
New Register House
Edinburgh EH1 3YT
Ph: 0131-334 0380

Northern Ireland

Registrar General
49-55 Chichester Street
Belfast BT1 4HL
Ph: 028-9025-2000

Irish Republic

General Register Office
8/11 Lombard Street East
Dublin 2
Tel: 03531-671 1000